

Cued Speech with deafened people

'Cued Speech - Why do we leave it so neglected?'

In this article - extracts from a longer article - Ron Hilton, an Outreach Volunteer for the LINK Centre for Deafened People, looks at the use of Cued Speech with deafened adults.

'Did you see the Parkinson shows on TV in the summer, with those short clips of lip speaking at the beginning and end of each part? Clear lip speaking, shown so close as to fill the whole TV screen should give all the clues for anyone who needs to lip read but could you read every word, every time. If you can answer yes to that question, congratulations but I suspect that you are more skilful than a good many deafened people. For a lot of lip readers, something to provide a few more clues would be very welcome.

All deafened readers will know the difficulties with sounds that cannot be lip read. The p, m, b letters and the throat sounds of k, g, h are some of the more obvious examples. With Cued Speech those letters, and much more, are ***all visually different***. So no more guessing. If speech has not made sense first time, a repetition with ***subtitles*** is available, portable and always accessible (so long as the speaker has a free hand and is prepared to learn!).

What more could we ask for?

Logically Cued Speech seems to be so valuable but so many deafened people seem to be unaware of its existence or know very little about it. No effort is made to supply information, or even to raise awareness, at lip reading classes or during rehabilitation programmes.

Why do we leave it so neglected?

I believe that Cued Speech may offer something for all deafened people. For most it will be an additional skill, to be used a little when required but for some, it could be very much more. The hope of finding something of value for those in need is the real reason behind this article. The more methods of communication that deafened people can use, the more inclusive we become. It is essential that we should all be fully informed of what is available and able to make a free choice. If some deafened people find that Cued Speech is a skill that suits their particular needs, we should all support them with that choice, so that all have the opportunity to achieve the best rehabilitation available to them.

Many deaf children brought up with the use of Cued Speech will in time progress to lip reading or the use of an implant, letting Cued Speech become a supplementary but still very useful back-up skill. It is likely that most deafened people would take the same approach. Since deafened people already have the literary skills, learning Cued Speech will be much easier for them and it could do much to bridge that initial period of despair and isolation until other replacement communication skills can be acquired.

I would encourage all deafened people to find out more about Cued Speech, spread the word and hopefully give it a try – a good deal of what is required can be self taught. You will have fun (hopefully quite a lot) and you will learn something new. Potentially you will stand to gain (and make available to others) something very much more. Apart from its own value as a means of communication, Cued Speech is also claimed to help significantly with lip reading skills, with the co-ordination of sound/speech understanding for new implant users and with speech problems.'

If you have any comments or questions on the above article, please e-mail Ron at:
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